Improvement is a continuous process and a number of steps have been taken by the Government to improve the coverage and delivery of the services under the ICDS Scheme. Significant among these are:

(i) Expansion of the ICDS Scheme to 466 new projects and 1.88 lakh AWCs in the last year.

(ii) Further expansion (165 ICDS projects, 1.07 lakh AWCs, 25, 961 mini AWCs) is under active consideration.

Crimes against children

2100. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that child trafficking, traditionally associated with only trafficking for commercial sex, is growing fast in India;

(b) whether it is a fact that according to National Human Rights Commission (MHRC), every year an average of 44,476 children go missing and of these 11,008 are never traced;

(c) whether it is a fact that there are no laws that specifically target child trafficking; and

(d) if so, the steps Government propose to take to have a separate legislation to deal with offences against children?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) and (b) The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in collaboration with the UNIFAM and the Institute of Social Science, New Delhi, conducted an Action Research on Trafficking in Women and Children in India. The study has brought out that child trafficking is growing in India. The Action Research has a chapter on 'Missing Persons and Trafficking.' Available data shows that on a average 44476 children went missing every year and out of these, 11,008 children remained untraced.

(c) and (d) The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 supplemented by the Indian Penal Code prohibits trafficking in human beings including children for purpose of prostitution and lays down severe penalties for traffickers. The ITPA is now being further amended providing for more stringent punishment for trafficking in persons including children. The

amended Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on 22nd May, 2006 and is now under the examination of the Ministry related Parliamentary Standing Committee.

Malnourished children in India

†2101. SHRI MANGANI LAL MANDAL: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that out of 14.6 crores children under malnutrition all over the world, 5.7 crores children are in India alone as per UNICEF;

(b) whether it is a fact that malnutrition is the cause of 50 per cent infant death in India wherein 21 lakh infants die every year; and

(c) if so, State-wise details thereof and the efforts Government are making in this regard, in this light?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) As per UNICEF report titled "Progress for Children, A Report Card on Nutrition, No. 4, May, 2006", out of 14.06 crore underweight children under 5 years in the World, 5.7 crore are from India. However, these estimates of underweight children in India are based on findings of National Family Health Survey (NFHS) carried out in 1998-99. The third NFHS is currently underway and its finding are expected by the end of the year.

(b) and (c) Malnutrition is a multifaceted, multi-dimensional problem and is not a direct but underlying cause of death as it increases morbidity and mortality by reducing the resistance to infections. No State Government has, however, reported infant deaths due to malnutrition.

Since the problem of malnutrition is multi-sectoral, intergenerational in nature, it needs to be tackled through coordinated interventions in area of food security, safe drinking water, sanitation, nutrition, health & family welfare, poverty alleviation etc. The Government is already seized of the problem and a number of Schemes/Programmes are being implemented through various Ministries/Departments which have, direct or indirect

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.